

REVISED DEATH CERTIFICATE

The process of revising the Florida death certificate and fetal death certificate has begun. The implementation date for the revised certificates is January 1, 2005. This revision process coincides with the national revision process. Approximately every 10 to 15 years the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) recommends a revision to vital records to improve data collection nationwide. The revised birth certificate has already been implemented as of March 1, 2004.

Representatives from the Department of Health, the funeral industry, and the medical community will meet in the spring to review and discuss the changes on the standard death and fetal death certificates proposed by NCHS. The Office of Vital Statistics looks forward to working cooperatively with our partners in creating a revised Florida death certificate and fetal death certificate.

In February, the state office contacted the vendors of approved software packages that generate the death certificate. The vendors, as well as those establishments utilizing their software, are being kept informed in order to update their software to meet the requirements and needs of the revised record.

Beginning in the fall of 2004, training will be provided to county vital statistics staff as well as funeral home staff, medical examiner's offices and their staff, and physicians. The Quality Assurance Field Representatives will be working with the counties on setting training schedules. More detailed information on the revised death certificate will be forthcoming in the June issue of the *Vital News*.



CHIEF DEPUTY REGISTRAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The CDRAC group has been working with the state office to develop a web based, internal customer service survey for each chief deputy registrar to complete. The survey will be used to assess the satisfaction with state office services to the local offices. The results will identify areas of opportunity for improvement. Using our experiences and ideas, we have come up with a first draft that will be submitted to the state office for review.

The most recent CDRAC call focused on the new birth certificate forms and the March 1 implementation. We look forward to leaving the old behind and moving ahead with the new!

Future CDRAC calls will be scheduled for the third Friday of the month. Chief deputy registrars who have questions for the group can contact the Chair, Luz Perez, CDR, Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8002, ext. 4001 or SunCom 582-2002.

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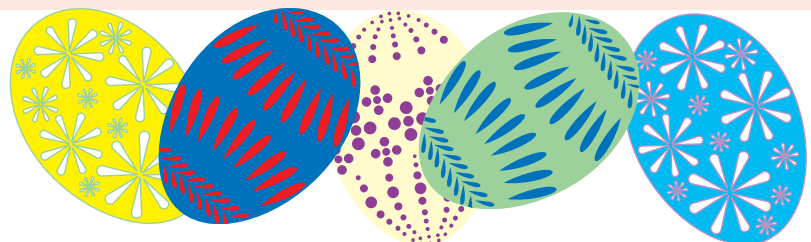
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ELECTRONIC REGISTRATIONS SYSTEM

The state office has begun implementation of the Electronic Vital Records Registration System (EVRRS), Phase 1, which consists of Birth, Amendments, and Correspondence Accounting System (CAS). This system, also referred to as the "QS System," is the mechanism by which all births and deaths are entered into the state database, thus making births available (deaths will be available in 2005) for subsequent issuance of certifications and amendments. The system allows for tracking of applicants and security paper audit control numbers utilized in the issuance of birth certifications, and provides an accounting of all funds.

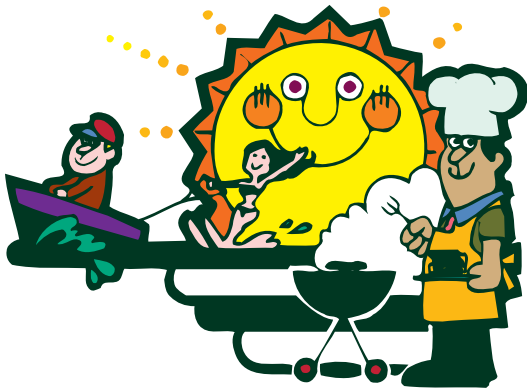
Over the next few months, the county vital statistics staff will be trained on the use of the new system and the counties brought on-line with the system. County Health Department IT staff, and business managers, as well as vitals staff, are being kept up to date with the progress of implementation and will be ready when their turn arrives.

It's an exciting time to be part of Vital Statistics. We look forward to the implementation and operation of this new system, making it easier to locate records, to more efficiently track applicants, and to begin to sound the death knoll of manual Audit Control Number logs.



CHANGE IN LATITUDE

Robin Giddens Sheppard has left the vital statistics family and returned to her roots as funeral director. Robin spent 20 years as a quality assurance field representative and she will be sorely missed by all of us here at the state office and also by those in the county offices. She hasn't gone too far, as she is the new managing director of Hardage-Giddens Beaches Funeral Home here in Jacksonville. We look forward to working with Robin as she now dons that other hat!



FETAL DEATH < 20 WEEKS GESTATION

Section 382.002 (5), F.S., defines fetal death as, "Fetal death means death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction of a product of human conception from its mother if the 20th week of gestation has been reached and the death is indicated by the fact that after such expulsion or extraction the fetus does not breathe or show any other evidence of life such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, of definite movement of voluntary muscles" (see related article on page three of this issue.)

When a mother delivers a fetus *prior* to 20 weeks gestation, Florida Statutes do not allow for a fetal death certificate to be filed. The parents certainly may elect to have a funeral service for the fetus if they wish. In those instances, however, the funeral director must be mindful of the statute requirements. Since a fetal death certificate will not be completed, it follows that no burial-transit permit will be issued for the fetus. If burial is elected for final disposition and the cemetery has concerns regarding documentation, the funeral director can prepare a statement on letterhead stationery citing the statute and that there is no further documentation forthcoming from the Office of Vital Statistics. If cremation is the final disposition, the medical examiner does not need to be notified when it is less than 20 weeks gestation. A similar statement can be constructed for the crematory.

Questions regarding fetal death should be directed to the Chief Deputy Registrar or a Quality Assurance Field Representative at the state office.

REVISED BIRTH CERTIFICATE

March 1, 2004, saw the successful implementation of the revised Florida birth certificate. A letter was forwarded in February to the membership of the Florida Hospital Association and the Florida Health Information Management Association, advising them that implementation would proceed as scheduled and thanking them for working with the department to make the transition. Brookins, Inc., sent updates to the hospitals utilizing the "Birthtype" program and they were able to install the new software and proceed with the new record.

This cooperative effort has resulted in a relatively smooth transition from the old form to the new, resulting in minimal delays due to unfamiliarity with the format and the new items added.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS & THE FAX

Use of the fax has been a topic of several conference calls over the last year. The practice is a good one when used properly and in compliance with existing statutes and department procedures.

It is acceptable for the funeral director to fax a properly completed application for certifications to the county vital statistics office. The faxed copy now becomes the official application and there should be no "hard copy" filed, thus preventing the possibility of duplicate orders. This procedure would seem to expedite processing of requests when time is a factor in obtaining certifications.

The local registrar copy of the burial transit permit may also be faxed to the county office by the funeral director/subregistrar. One of the purposes of the permit is to ensure prompt notification to local health officials of a death in the county. Faxing the permit should also help to ensure that the CDR is aware of the death and prepared to initiate follow-up when a record is not filed on time, thus assisting in noncompliance situations.



WELCOME ABOARD

The following appointment has been made to the position of Registrar:

Local Registrar:

Michael J. Napier Seminole County

Chief Deputy Registrar:

Angela Bergsma Gilchrist County

CSE UNIT WINS AWARD

On January 22, 2004, Gwendolyn McNeil, Child Support Enforcement Unit Supervisor, attended a meeting with the Department of Revenue/Child Support Enforcement Office (DOR/CSE) in Tallahassee where she was presented a certificate of appreciation for assisting the office in increasing the number of paternities established within the last fiscal year.

Our business partners identified birth records where paternity had been established within the court system but the birth certificate had not been updated. DOR/CSE forwarded the identified court orders to the Office of Vital Statistics, resulting in approximately 4800 records being updated. The increased paternity establishment has had a positive financial impact not only on the office, but on the Department of Health and the State of Florida as well. The unit is to be commended for its diligence in getting the job done!

USE OF DEATH REGISTRATION DELAY REPORT

The Death Registration Delay Report (DRD), DH 1355, is designed for use when a death record cannot be filed on time due to the physician's failure to sign the record within the prescribed time limits. Section 382.008 (3b), F.S., requires written justification if the physician or medical examiner cannot complete cause of death within the required time. The DRD is that written justification.

Some examples when the DRD should be completed are: the physician has left the country, but has assured the funeral director that upon his/her return, the record will be completed; the funeral director provided the record in sufficient time, but the physician, lost, destroyed, signed incorrectly, or ignored the record; and the physician originally agreed to sign the record, but has now changed his/her mind and refuses to sign. All the funeral director's attempt to obtain the record should be documented on this form.

There are many scenarios in which a DRD is not called for, such as the physician was supposed to mail the record directly to the county office, but it was lost in the mail (use of the mail is never a reason to complete a DRD); the funeral director did not make the record available to the physician in sufficient time to allow for completion within the 72 hours prescribed in statute, thus making the record late (this falls back on the funeral director, not the physician); or the funeral director was waiting for the family to provide additional personal information on the decedent. These are situations of possible noncompliance, not delays due to the physician.

The Vital Records Registration Handbook, Chapter Five, Registration of Deaths, includes instructions on the proper use of the Death Registration Delay Report. If there are questions, please contact the Chief Deputy Registrar.

NOTIFICATION OF FETAL DEMISE FORM

Following the 2003 Legislative Session, Governor Bush signed into law the Stephanie Saboor Grieving Parents Act. Section 383.33625, Florida Statutes, requires a licensed health care practitioner having custody of fetal remains following spontaneous fetal demise to notify the mother of her option to arrange for a burial or a cremation of the fetal remains or to allow the physician to handle the disposition by means customarily used. Fetal demise is defined as a spontaneous fetal demise of less than 20 weeks gestation.

For occurrences in the physician's office, the statute requires the Department of Health to develop a form for physicians to use in recording the mother's election of rights under this provision. For cases which occur within a facility, the statute requires the Agency for Health Care Administration to develop a similar form for use by facility staff.

The Notification of Disposition of Fetal Demise form, DH Form1966, for use by physicians, can be printed from the department's website at:

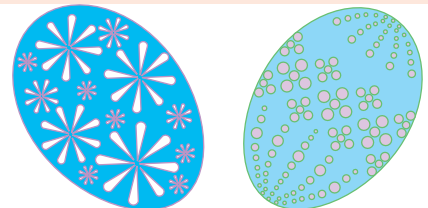
http://www.doh.state.fl.us/planning_eval/Vital_statistics/index.html

An electronic version of the form or pre-printed forms can be obtained by contacting:

Vickie Johns
Office of Vital Statistics
Post Office Box 210
Jacksonville, Florida 32231

The statistical tables, along with past issues of the Vital News, can be found on the department's website at the following address:

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Planning_eval/Vital_Statistics/VitalNews/vn-index.html



BITS 'N PIECES

- The Death Registration Unit has mailed CDRs the list of **2003 outstanding temporary/pending records**. Be sure to follow up promptly with the medical examiner to check on the status and when the permanent/replacement records will be filed. All responses are due to Kenny Higginbotham by April 1, 2004, at (904) 359-6900 ext. 1017 or SunCom 826-6900 ext. 1017
- CDR should maintain a list of all facilities in their counties and whether they are inside of outside of the city limits. If there is a name change for a hospital, nursing home, assisted living facility, or other facility, be sure to notify area funeral directors so that records can be prepared with the correct information.

PLEASE MAIL CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO:
OFFICE OF VITAL STATISTICS, QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT
P. O. BOX 210
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32231-0042

New Mailing Address: _____

Address as shown on current newsletter: _____

Date: _____

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM
PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION



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Office of Vital Statistics
Quality Assurance Unit (HPEVSRR)
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